Manchester Urban Ponds Restoration Program

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The History of Maxwell Pond



Maxwell Pond Dam, early 1900's. Photo: NHDES

Maxwell Pond has been an essential part of Manchester's history. Both utilitarian and recreational uses have flourished in decades past. Recorded accounts of Maxwell Pond's history are few and difficult to locate, but much of it lives in the memories of those living in surrounding neighborhoods.

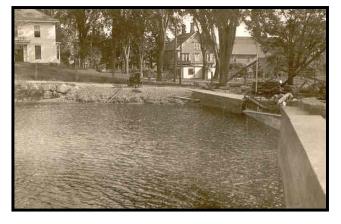
A.H. Maxwell & Manchester Coal & Ice Company

Maxwell Pond was reportedly named for A.H. Maxwell, who owned the Manchester Coal & Ice Company. Ice harvesting began at Maxwell Pond in 1910 with the installation of a dam on Black Brook. Maxwell Pond was considered the best source in Manchester for pure ice. The company would keep the ice cold with haybales and sell it year round (Drociak, 2000).

Recreation

Until the late 1950's, Maxwell Pond was a popular for swimming, picnicking, and fishing in the summer. In the winter months the pond provided a spot for skating, bonfires and hockey games. It was even considered for a secondary municipal water source for the City of Manchester, but the idea was apparently abandoned sometime in the 1960's. In the late 1950's and early 1960's Maxwell Pond began to change when a cement company located upstream began impacting Black Brook by washing sediment into the streambed.

In 1954, a NH Fish and Game Department survey noted that the pond contained only warm water fish species, such as chain pickerel, horned pout and sunfish, but was a marginal salmonid water body. There are reports, however, of fishermen catching trout here and especially upstream in Black Brook where conditions most likely would have been ideal for a trout fishery.



Maxwell Pond, inside the dam (Early 1900;s). Photo: NHDES



Maxwell Pond, inside the dam (2003). Photo: Manchester Parks & Recreation

Today, the pond (which had a maximum depth of 8 feet in 1954) has a maximum depth of just 4 feet. Clearly the land uses upstream have had an impact on Maxwell Pond. Few people still fish here, but with limited success. Neighborhood children use the steep hillside adjacent to the pond for sledding in the winter, but the numerous historic uses of Maxwell Pond are greatly diminished. The shoreline is much the same as it was a century ago, but characteristics of the pond itself have changed immensely.